



WISEWOMAN

Success Story 2 WISEWOMAN Uses Motivational Interviewing to Help Alaska Native Women Quit Tobacco

Location Rural Southeastern Alaska

Focus Provide women in this isolated rural area with a nicotine dependence treatment program that offers both counseling and pharmacotherapy.

Strategy The SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) trained staff to treat nicotine dependence, which included teaching them to use motivational interviewing as a counseling approach. Nicotine replacement therapy was made available, unless contraindicated, to women actively enrolled in counseling.

Early Successes The motivational interviewing technique helps health care professionals increase clients' desire to stop using tobacco because they "want to," rather than because they "have to." Motivational interviewing uses a nonconfrontational style of interviewing to support clients as they explore reasons to make healthy lifestyle changes. Consequently, women may be less resistant, more apt to talk openly, and more self-motivated to quit smoking.

So far, 312 women have had access to the nicotine dependence treatment program. When WISEWOMAN expands in 2005, 650 women can take advantage of the program.

For More Information Nancy C. Knapp, MPH
WISEWOMAN Project Director
SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium
222 Tongass Drive
Sitka, AK 99835
Phone: 907-966-8746
E-mail: nancy.knapp@searhc.org

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When the SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium's (SEARHC) WISEWOMAN project was established in 2000, few Alaska health care organizations had nicotine dependence treatment programs. After years of trying to help people quit smoking—without much success—many health care providers did not know how to address the problem. WISEWOMAN staff members established a quit tobacco program and helped convince people that they can change their unhealthy habits.

WISEWOMAN Director Nancy Knapp places a high priority on addressing tobacco use in the Alaska panhandle, where more than 40% of the 6,000 Native women use tobacco. She made sure staff members were trained to deliver nicotine dependence treatment counseling and pharmacotherapy in the largest WISEWOMAN clinics. WISEWOMAN sent four health educators to the Mayo Clinic and the University of Massachusetts, where they learned to treat nicotine dependence and learned about the technique of motivational interviewing. The motivational interviewing approach is based on the core belief that the capacity and potential for behavior change is within every person, and that people are more motivated to change when change is based on their own decisions and choices, rather than an authority figure telling them what to do.

WISEWOMAN placed the trained staff at clinics in Sitka, Juneau, Haines, and Klawock. In Sitka, staff established and tested a nicotine replacement therapy protocol. Any new WISEWOMAN enrollee who was a tobacco user received cessation counseling supported by pharmacotherapy. Women in counseling met with a nicotine dependence counselor, then received follow-up by phone or in person. Women receiving nicotine replacement therapy checked in with the counselor at least once every 2 weeks to continue receiving the medication.

In all four clinics, motivational interviewing enabled WISEWOMAN staff to help Alaska Native women quit smoking cigarettes and chewing tobacco. Because of limited staff time, WISEWOMAN staff were trained to conduct brief motivational interviewing. As a result, counselors help clients explore their ambivalent feelings toward tobacco and the role it plays in their lives. The staff member and the client then discuss how the client can make informed choices. If she wants to quit, further support is offered.

"The emphasis on listening makes this communication model ideal for use with the women we serve," Nancy says. "In the Native culture, you ask questions differently and you wait longer for a response. The motivational technique requires you to really take the time to listen to people and to respect the

decisions they have made for their lives, and that's why we invested in the training."

Lynda Koski, a patient educator at the Juneau clinic, believes in the technique and tries to use it whenever she works with WISEWOMAN participants. "As a nurse, I was taught years ago that my role was to give patients health education and hope they would make healthy changes," Lynda says. "Yet we know from experience that people do not really make changes unless that change comes from within. This technique allows us to help them find the motivating factor that will help them change. We ask them what they think they should do, and we listen."



This mother-daughter nursing team at the SEARHC/Mt. Edgecumbe Hospital in Sitka, Alaska, is grateful for the quit tobacco initiatives now available to women.

When talking with a woman about her use of tobacco, Lynda helps identify the biggest barriers to quitting, then asks her to brainstorm about ways she can overcome these barriers and to think about the benefits of quitting. She reminds the woman of these benefits later to keep her motivated. Many participants have not commented on her use of motivational interviewing. "But I see a difference. Often women come in with their defenses up because they expect me to tell them what to do. When I use this technique, I see their defenses drop a bit. They are more ready to talk."

Importance of Success

WISEWOMAN staff members were the pioneers in providing nicotine dependence treatment services in Alaska. Today there is a high demand for cessation counseling among WISEWOMAN participants, more than a fourth of whom use tobacco. Over 300 women have access to services that will help them quit using tobacco and improve their heart health. When WISEWOMAN expands in 2005, project staff anticipate that they can provide tobacco use cessation support to 650 women.

Lessons Learned

- Recognize the important role that communication styles play in addressing tobacco use.
- When using the motivational interviewing technique, be prepared for a potentially challenging transition. The counseling technique requires health workers to use an approach that can be quite different from the one they originally were trained to use. Encourage staff members to take refresher courses in motivational interviewing and to continue using the skills that they learn.
- If possible, train all of your providers to use the motivational interviewing technique together. Providers can share stories, successes, and support with one another.